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XXI

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SPECIES OF LIZARD
FROM MALPELO ISLAND

BY

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In November and December, 1927, Captain G. Allan Hancock, of Los Angeles, made a trip with his *SS Oaxaca*, to the Galapagos Islands. The writer and Mr. Frank Tose, chief of exhibits of the California Academy of Sciences, were kindly invited by Captain Hancock to accompany the expedition as his guests, representing the Academy.

Brief stops were made at several different places on the way down and back. One of these was at Malpelo Island, a barren basaltic rock, first sighted by Colnett in 1793, and situated, according to the latest surveys, in Lat. $3^{\circ} 59' N.$ and Long. $81^{\circ} 34' W.$ It lies about 250 miles off the mouth of the San Juan River, United States of Colombia.

Captain Hancock stopped the *Oaxaca* a short time off this island on which I was able to make a landing from a small skiff on the northeast end, on the morning of December 20. My good friend, Mr. J. T. Bounphrey, also a guest of Captain Hancock, after landing me, stood by with the skiff in case a hurried departure became necessary.

The Hydrographic Office¹ states that some dwarf bushes grow in the cracks and gullies, but a close inspection failed to

¹ South America Pilot, Vol. III, p. 405, 1920.

locate any plant life whatsoever. At a short distance the island appears light green in color, but this is probably caused by the guano from the numerous sea birds. As the island is in a rainy belt and often drenched by heavy squalls, miniature waterfalls can be seen tumbling down over the face of the rock. With the exception of the birds seen, a short search failed to reveal any life whatever, but some small crabs and two species of lizards, *Anolis agassizii* Stejneger,² of which 27 specimens were collected, and a new species of *Celestus* of which 10 specimens were secured.

The island is a mere rock about a mile in length and 846 feet in height. From a distance it appears like a gigantic castle projecting out of the ocean.

The following birds were noted: Brewster's Booby, Blue-faced? Booby, two Martins (*Progne*), and a Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*).³

The accompanying plates are from photographs by Mr. George Stone, published with the permission of Captain Hancock.

Celestus hancocki, new species

Plate 26

Diagnosis: Size large. Snout depressed, sharply rounded; ear-opening round or somewhat elongated; rostral twice as broad as high; nasal situated posteriorly in a single plate; two postnasal plates; supraorbitals five; two large pairs of supra-nasals; azygos prefrontal longer than wide, tapering to a point posteriorly and touching the frontal; a pair of fronto-parietals; five pairs of chin shields, first three in contact with lower labials; 10 upper labials; 57 scale rows around the middle of the body; scales smooth, imbricate; limbs well developed, overlapping when adpressed; pentadactyle; claws semiretractile; teeth short, with rounded crowns; tail cylindrical.

² Of which Dr. Charles H. Townsend obtained four specimens March 5, 1891, when he visited Malpelo Island on the Fish Commission Steamer *Albatross*. Dr. Townsend observed these lizards running over the rocks near the water. He found the "island too steep to afford a landing, but the lizards were shot off or whisked off the face of the cliffs, thus falling into the water, whence they were secured by the collector." See Stejneger, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., Vol. XXXVI, No. 6, p. 163.

³ Collected by Mr. Frank Tose, and identified by Miss Mary E. McLellan, Assistant Curator Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy, California Academy of Sciences.

Dorsal and lateral regions metallic black, profusely marked with minute creamy-white dots, except the upper surface of the tail, which may be sparingly marked; under surfaces brownish or whitish, the abdominal scales white, or having white centers; white coloring of gular region sometimes forming longitudinal lines; both upper and lower surfaces of limbs profusely spotted with creamy-white.

Total length of the type 425 mm.; width of head 40; body 230; tail 195; fore limb 56; hind limb 75.

The nine cotypes, all in the Museum of the California Academy of Sciences, present the following measurements:

No.	Total length	Width of head	Tail	Body	Fore limb	Hind limb
62583	395	41	158	237	56	75
62584	394	32	195	199	49	66
62585	397	35	182	215	54	72
62586	376	30	174	202	50	65
62587	332+	40	96+	236	59	74
62588	380	34	170	210	52	78
62589	379	30	171	208	52	65
62590	358	30	165	193	44	60
62591	297	20	150	147	32	52

Type: No. 62,582, Mus. Calif. Acad. Sci., collected by Joseph R. Slevin, December 20, 1927, on **Malpelo Island**.

It affords me great pleasure to name this new species in honor of Captain G. Allan Hancock, who very kindly made a stop at the island while *en route* to Balboa, Canal Zone, when returning from the Galapagos Islands. My thanks for securing this lizard are also due Mr. J. T. Boumphrey, who proved himself an excellent boatman and landed me on the island despite the somewhat unfavorable weather conditions.

This species appears to be closely allied to *Celestus millepunctatus* O'Shaughnessy, a single specimen of unknown habitat, collected by Lieutenant Wood on the voyage of *H. M. S. Herald*, 1845-1851, from which the present species differs in coloration, in having two postnasal plates, a greater number of chin shields and supraoculars, and in the development of the limbs.

All of the specimens collected by me were taken on a rocky ledge within a few feet of the water's edge. When wounded

they did not hesitate to take to the water and, on several occasions, ran into the small tide pools, leaving nothing but the head exposed.

The food of these lizards seems to consist principally of small crabs, which are abundant on the island. A piece of crab leg 36 mm. in length was taken from the stomach of one of the specimens collected. Besides this, several small feathers, presumably from some sea bird, were found in the same stomach. Other lizards of the series collected were found to contain both feathers and the remains of crabs.